

## **Summary of Environmental Assurance Workshop (EAW)**

**Held as part of the Third National On-Farm Food Safety & Quality Conference, Hobart,  
23 July 2002**

**Organised By Tasmanian Quality Assured and sponsored  
by the Department of Primary Industries, Water and the Environment, and Agriculture,  
Fisheries and Forestry – Australia.**

**Foodlink Management Services  
30 August 2002**

## **Summary**

One hundred industry delegates attended the *Environmental Assurance Workshop (EAW)* held on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> July as part of the *Third National On-Farm Food Safety & Quality Conference* in Hobart. The EAW was convened by the *EUREPGAP Horticulture Compliance Sub Committee (AFFA)* with the aim of progressing discussion of Environmental Assurance (EA) requirements on-farm and developing an EA framework that builds on existing on-farm management systems, and can be used as a reference for implementation (or creation of proprietary systems) on farm. 22% of the attendees were growers, with the balance from Commonwealth and State authorities, industry organisations, industry support organisations, and interested parties.

The majority of delegates also attended a EUREPGAP Awareness Workshop the previous afternoon, conducted by Dr Kristian Moeller, Managing Director of FoodPlus GmbH and Secretary of EUREPGAP.

The objective of the workshop was to progress the environmental assurance debate on two distinct but related fronts:

1. Develop an optional mechanism of compliance for those growers wishing to export to relevant European markets – the EUREPGAP route;
2. Develop an Australian environmental assurance framework to build on existing on-farm management systems – the AUSGAP route

This workshop started with the intention of using EUREPGAP as a template for the development of a parallel Australian EA framework. The Horticultural Compliance Sub-Committee emphasised that EUREPGAP is not the only scheme of its kind emerging in the global food trade and stressed that their aim is not to endorse it in particular or encourage its adoption as a national standard in Australia.

However, EUREPGAP is not solely an Environmental Assurance System. It is an on-farm management system that covers Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), including food safety, environmental, production, and worker welfare considerations. In the views of some delegates, environmental aspects of EUREPGAP could be strengthened.

EUREPGAP was developed in response to specific market signals in the European retail trade for fresh fruit and vegetables. The EUREPGAP Horticulture Compliance Sub Committee (EHSC) is focusing on enabling quality assurance providers to meet the EUREPGAP criteria in order to maintain and improve market access. While the EAW focussed primarily on broader Australian environmental considerations, by the end of the workshop, it seemed that the rational course of action would be to respond to existing market signals such as EUREPGAP rather than to develop a separate, local EA scheme without a market incentive. It was also suggested that the progression of such an EA scheme would undermine the existing Environmental Management Systems (EMS) framework. Some delegates would like to promote Australia's involvement in the ongoing technical development of EUREPGAP and strengthen the protocol's environmental aspects. However, these considerations were not broadly endorsed by the EAW and are outside the scope of the EHSC.

The advantages of a 'EUREPGAP' approach are self-apparent:

- A small but growing group of Australian farmers are already working towards EUREPGAP compliance to meet the requirements of European buyers. This number will increase.
- The influence of EUREPGAP will increase globally as the retail drivers spread into other regions including our major export markets, eg Asia.

- There is no commercial imperative for EA in Australia's domestic market at present, and no indications that this will be a consideration in the immediate future.
- The globalisation of the food supply system has led to the increasing development of trans-national solutions to product assurance such as those offered by EUREPGAP.
- EUREPGAP is in an advanced stage of technical development and implementation, but presents itself as a 'work in progress' and actively encourages contribution to its improvement.
- EUREPGAP is also a harmonisation scheme, which actively encourages integration, and building on existing on-farm systems. Thus work done to date on implementing existing on-farm systems is not 'wasted' but contributes towards EUREPGAP compliance.
- As Max Tolson (Mildura table grape grower and Consultant who is implementing EUREPGAP) pointed out "by being tailored for fresh produce farming and being prescriptive EUREPGAP will probably be more effective than HACCP, and simpler to implement".

(over)

The following action is proposed for the EUREPGAP Horticulture Compliance Sub Committee's consideration:

<b>Action</b>	<b>Action by</b>
1. Complete the existing benchmarking project to develop documentation to facilitate EUREPGAP compliance in the horticultural sector.	EUREPGAP Horticultural Compliance Sub-Committee

In addition, participants in the EAW put the following actions forward. It is suggested they be referred to the relevant parties for consideration and/or action:

<b>Proposed Action</b>	<b>Potential action by/referral to</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish an Australian taskforce to examine EUREPGAP, interpret the Protocol in the context of the Australian environment and suggest amendments.</li> <li>2. Promote Australian involvement in the EUREPGAP Technical and Standard Committee. EUREPGAP is based on EU regulations and European environmental concerns. Australian industry involvement is necessary to ensure it can be adapted to Australian regulations and conditions.</li> </ol>	Such an initiative may be supported under the 'food and quality initiative' of the National Food Industry Strategy.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. The Australian on-farm QA systems should apply for membership of EUREPGAP and undertake the full EUREPGAP compliance benchmarking process. This will need to be done at some stage if Australian on-farm systems are to be recognised as partially EUREPGAP compliant.</li> </ol>	Freshcare, SQFI, HAL, etc...
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. The environmental considerations of the group outcomes should be referred to the Natural Resource Management Standing Committee (NRMSC) and the Environmental Management Systems Standing Committee (EMSSC) for consideration and action. This may include consideration under the EMS initiative.</li> </ol>	NRMSC and EMSSC

## **Contents**

Summary .....	2
1. The EUREPGAP Route .....	7
1.1 What is EUREPGAP .....	7
1.2 EUREPGAP Horticultural Compliance Sub Committee .....	7
1.3 Preliminary Gap Analyses .....	8
1.4 Views of an Australian Grower .....	8
1.5 Customising EUREPGAP for Australia .....	9
1.6 EUREPGAP Route – Next Steps .....	9
2. The AUSGAP Route.....	11
2.1 Australian GAP Framework.....	11
2.2 Discussion Topics .....	11
2.3 Group Outcomes .....	12
2.4 AUSGAP Route – Next Steps .....	13
3. Conclusions from Environmental Assurance Workshop .....	13
Appendix 1: Group Reports .....	166
Appendix 2: "News' Article from EUREPGAP Website .....	233

### Note:

I am grateful for the constructive comments and feedback received on the first version of this draft report from the following members of the Sub-Committee:

Dr Anne-Maree Boland, Program Leader, Environmental Management, NRE;  
Jane Lovell, Manager, TQA;  
Felicity Ayliffe, Horticulture Policy, AFFA

Their comments have been incorporated into this final draft

Bill McBride  
Foodlink Management Services  
PO Box 3366  
Bangor NSW 2234  
Tel: +612 9541 4777  
Fax: +612 9541 4211

## **Objectives**

The objective of the workshop was to progress the environmental assurance debate on two distinct but related fronts:

1. Develop an optional mechanism of compliance for those growers wishing to export to relevant European markets – the EUREPGAP route;
2. Develop an Australian environmental assurance framework to build on existing on-farm management systems – the AUSGAP route

## **1. The EUREPGAP Route**

### **1.1 What is EUREPGAP**

EUREPGAP is the Euro-Retailers Produce Working Group on Good Agricultural Practice. It is an initiative of the major European supermarket chains and their suppliers. It is an on-farm management system that covers Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), including food safety, environmental, production, and worker welfare considerations. The main features of EUREPGAP are:

- It is a private sector initiative that will affect commercial contractual relationships between (European) supermarkets, their suppliers and in particular the farms that supply these supermarkets with fresh produce.
- It involves harmonisation of on-farm production standards, as it brings together a single set of standards that cover food safety, quality, worker health, safety and welfare and environmental issues.
- The current priority is fresh fruit and vegetables, but working groups have been established for cut flowers and ornamentals, coffee, livestock, feed and combinable crops.
- The guidelines or standards have been published in a Protocol and associated documents that were publicly released in September 2001, after about five years of development.
- EUREPGAP involves certification of production through accreditation of existing on-farm schemes. Individuals or groups can also apply directly to EUREPGAP for certification.
- EUREPGAP forms a baseline standard for the large number of retailers involved with the group. Suppliers will need to meet any additional requirements of individual retailers when negotiating supply arrangements.
- EUREPGAP is also of particular relevance to Australian producers as European retailers are expanding worldwide. In particular, they are moving into Asia, Australia's most important market. It remains to be seen if they will demand compliance with the EUREPGAP protocol in these markets.

### **1.2 EUREPGAP Horticultural Compliance Sub Committee**

The EUREPGAP Horticulture Compliance Sub Committee is a technical committee of the AFFA Working Group on Safety and Quality System's Equivalence. The Terms of Reference for the sub-committee are to:

1. Analyse the *EUREPGAP Protocol for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables* and the accreditation process.
2. Identify gaps in the current range of major QA and food safety schemes relevant to the Australian horticultural sector, particularly in the areas of environmental protection and worker health, safety and welfare.

Develop generic guidelines or modules that will enable the QA and food safety schemes to meet the additional EUREPGAP requirements. The first phase of this project culminated with presentation of preliminary gap analyses between Australian Horticultural on-farm schemes and EUREPGAP at the EAW. Following the EAW, the Sub-Committee will embark on the preparation of guidelines or modules that that will enable Australian growers to build on their existing on-farm QA schemes and comply with EUREPGAP.

### **1.3 Preliminary Gap Analyses**

Richard Bennett of Horticulture Australia presented the preliminary gap analyses, on behalf of the Horticultural Compliance Sub Committee, to the workshop. The four contributors to the Gap Analyses were:

- SQF 2000<sup>CM</sup> Quality Code
- Integrated Fruit Production: Apples (AAPGA, AFFCo, AgVic, HRDC)
- Freshcare Code of Practice
- Enviroveg Program

The following summarises the caveats and conclusions of the gap analysis:

- Caveat 1: The premise of each of the schemes is different. EUREPGAP is a system that attempts to harmonise other on-farm production standards. It brings together a single set of standards that cover food safety, quality, worker health, safety and welfare and environmental issues. SQF is based on safety and quality, as is Freshcare, although using a different approach, whereas the AAPGA scheme is an on-farm production standard, and Enviroveg is purely an environmental system.
- Caveat 2: This study only compares the elements of the schemes. It does not consider the other equally important aspects such as system management, mechanism for implementation, level of market acceptance, supplier benefits, audit protocols, fee structures, branding, etc
- Caveat 3: Each of the gap analyses represents one person's (albeit a key system representative) view of the level of compliance, and is therefore subject to misunderstanding of the meaning of the EUREPGAP elements, and/or the level of compliance. This is exemplified by one of the schemes where a second interpretation indicated differences in the level of compliance.
- Caveat 4: EUREPGAP is eurocentric, developed by Europeans and based on European legislation and conditions. Some of the EUREPGAP elements are specific to European legislation and market requirements. If the Australian schemes were operating in that market, those elements would apply. Outside of that market, they don't.

Further research is required, and will be conducted, to clearly identify, as well as enumerate, the gaps between the systems. However early indications are that:

Conclusion 1: "Worker Health, Safety and Welfare" lacks the level of coverage in Australian schemes expected by EUREPGAP

Conclusion 2: Enviroveg and SQF 2000/Freshcare combined would go a long way to meeting EUREPGAP. The same cannot be said for IFP and SQF/Freshcare

### **1.4 Views of an Australian Grower**

Max Tolson is a Mildura table grape grower and local QA consultant. He spoke of his experiences implementing EUREPGAP, and concluded:

- Implementing only the "musts" and none of the "shoulds" makes EUREPGAP one of the most easily implemented QA schemes available;
- A QA manual is of limited value;

- Emphasis is on demonstration – not planning, process or procedure;
- The inspection by the auditor was important before implementation;
- Training or guidance would have been beneficial;
- EUREPGAP while basically developed on HACCP principles is a huge practical leap beyond the HACCP methodology;
- By being tailored for fresh produce farming and being prescriptive EUREPGAP will probably be more effective than HACCP, and simpler to implement.

### **1.5 Customising EUREPGAP for Australia**

The afternoon breakout sessions included a group investigating the “*customization of EUREPGAP for Australia*”. This group concluded that an Australian task force should be established to examine EUREPGAP, interpret the Protocol in the context of the Australian environment, and suggest amendments, based on the following assumptions:

- EUREPGAP is currently eurocentric, ie based on EU regulations and European environmental concerns. However it includes a mechanism for review and regional customisation;
- The protocol is fixed until 2004, although interpretations can be discussed prior to this date;
- Change to the protocol requires membership of EUREPGAP and representation to the Technical and Standards Committee. Currently there is no Australian representation on the Technical and Standards Committee;
- Australian customisation would need to include compliance with local legislation – summary of appropriate legislation required;
- Australian retailers need to be encouraged to be involved in the Australian review and become members of EUREPGAP;
- Environmental Management Systems provide a practical approach for applying EUREPGAP and other QA frameworks on the farm;
- EUREPGAP needs to build on existing Australian on-farm systems.

### **1.6 EUREPGAP Route – Next Steps**

EUREPGAP and FoodPlus GmbH are taking considerable interest in this part of the world. Over recent months we have been visited by the Chairman, Nigel Garbutt, and the Managing Director Dr Kristian Moeller, (albeit by invitation); the program for their Protocol Review Workshop in Madrid in September already includes a (presently unfilled) spot for “an Australian farmer”; and the Australian workshop already features as a news item on the EUREPGAP website (refer Attachment 3). Nevertheless, behind the marketing hype, EUREPGAP represents the new generation of on-farm systems and forms a useful model for Australian on-farm systems.

The following action is proposed for consideration by the EUREPGAP Horticulture Compliance Sub Committee,

1. Provide Australian horticultural growers with a guideline for EUREPGAP compliance that builds on existing on-farm systems;

Although not agreed outcomes of the EAW, some delegates made the following additional suggestions:

2. Establish an Australian task force to examine EUREPGAP, interpret the Protocol in the context of the Australian environment, and suggest amendments;
3. Australian retailers need to be encouraged to be involved in the Australian review and become members of EUREPGAP;
4. Promote Australian involvement in the EUREPGAP Technical and Standard Committee.
5. Strengthen the environmental aspects of EUREPGAP. It was pointed out that many of the environmental elements of EUREPGAP are only "shoulds", not "musts". The feeling of the workshop was that this imbalance needs to be adjusted.
6. The Australian on-farm QA systems should apply for membership of EUREPGAP and/or undertake the full EUREPGAP compliance benchmarking process. This will need to be done at some stage if Australian on-farm systems are to be recognised as partially EUREPGAP compliant.

## **2. The AUSGAP Route**

### **2.1 Australian GAP Framework**

EUREPGAP is not the only scheme of its kind emerging in the global food trade and the aim of the Horticultural Compliance Sub-Committee is not to endorse it in particular or encourage its adoption as a national standard in Australia. Rather, EUREPGAP is in an advanced stage of development and implementation and provides a useful model for Australian purposes. It offers an insight into emerging international requirements against which elements of existing Australian systems can and will be analysed.

Also, EUREPGAP is not just an Environmental Assurance System. It is an on-farm management system that covers Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), including food safety, environmental, production, and worker welfare considerations, and which in the views of some delegates, does not provide sufficient environmental focus.

Within that context, the afternoon session discussed some of the Australian GAP, issues, and in particular the environmental considerations on-farm, with a view to the development of a national GAP framework.

(Note: the term AUSGAP did not come out of the EAW, and is used here simply to differentiate between the EUREPGAP approach and the development of an Australian GAP framework)

Good Agricultural Practices:

Codes of Practice that provide guidance on agricultural activities in order to avoid or reduce the impact of these activities on the environment. These codes generally cover the protection of soil, water, animal welfare, and the safe, legal use of pesticides.

Dr Richard Baines  
Royal Agricultural College, UK

### **2.2 Discussion Topics**

Delegates contributed to the selection of topics for discussion, and then selected their discussion group. The selected topics were:

- Rational use of pesticides, agrochemicals and fertilisers
- Efficient use of natural resources (water and energy)
- Wildlife and landscape conservation and enhancement
- Auditing
- Environmental measures/indicators/monitoring
- Effective implementation and maintenance
- Integrating organics
- Training and education
- Changing/customising EUREPGAP for Australia
- Consumer awareness/education

However, equally important were the topics that were omitted. These are some of the additional issues that need to be addressed within an EA framework, including:

- Soil conservation, management, and protection
- Urban/rural interface
- Biosolids/manure guidelines
- Pollution prevention
- Recycling and re-use
- Worker welfare

### **2.3 Group Outcomes**

The outcomes of all group sessions are reported in Appendix 1. However the common themes across the groups were:

1. The workshop considered a number of GAP issues, including some environmental factors. There was a feeling amongst some delegates that the term EA was used too loosely, and confused the debate. We should be considering integrating all Australian GAP considerations.
2. Any move to introduce other facets of GAP must build on existing on-farm Quality Assurance systems, not duplicate them. There is reluctance to accept 'another' system that does not integrate existing on-farm systems. On the contrary, the message from growers is to reduce the burden of 'management systems'.
3. There needs to be a market imperative in Australia for widening the scope of on-farm systems. EUREPGAP is an initiative of the major European retailers, and is included in their supplier requirements. In Australia, by contrast, although the major retailers and food service organizations require some form of GAP, it is primarily food safety and quality focused. There is no commercial driver for environmental and worker welfare considerations. These businesses need to be included in any future discussion on widening the scope of GAP.
4. An Australian GAP framework must be industry owned and driven. Australian growers have negative experiences of 'imposed' systems that are often impractical in operation.
5. An Australian GAP framework must be based on Australian considerations. EUREPGAP is, by definition, Eurocentric – based on EU regulations and European environmental concerns. An Australian GAP framework must be based on Australian regulations and conditions, and even regionalized to consider all state regulations and environmental types.
6. Reduce multiple audits – one farm/one audit. The concept of on-farm auditing is generally accepted now, but growers want to see one auditor covering all on-farm aspects.
7. Identify drivers and barriers for any potential Australian GAP system, and devise strategies to overcome the barriers. They may include:

*Drivers:*

- Customers (consumer and retail)
- Ethics and self motivation
- Legislation and regulation

*Barriers:*

- Cost vs perceived benefits
- Resistance to change
- History of failures

- Competition/survival
  - Its too hard”, or “not enough time”
8. Communication, education, and training. A potential Australian GAP framework requires a strategy funded by industry that focuses on overcoming the barriers. It also requires a program of consumer awareness.
  9. Integrate ‘Organics’. There is some equivalence between EUREPGAP and the national organics standard. An Australian GAP framework must recognise the existence of the organics movement, and develop a mutual understanding, as EUREPGAP is doing in Europe.
  10. Develop an Australian GAP Guide/Checklist

#### **2.4 AUSGAP Route – Next Steps**

The following EAW outcomes are proposed for the Sub-committee’s consideration and action, and/or referral to the appropriate industry/government working party:

1. The ‘environmental’ considerations of the group discussion at the EAW should be referred to the Natural Resource Management Standing Committee (NRMSC) and the Environmental Management Systems Standing Committee (EMSSC) for consideration and action.
2. The auditing, training, and communication considerations may be referred to the Food Safety and Quality Assurance Initiative of the NFIS.
3. The issue of whether Australia needs it’s own EA/GAP framework requires much more thought, rigorous debate and consultation.

### **3. Conclusions from Environmental Assurance Workshop**

This workshop started with the intention of using EUREPGAP only as a template for the development of a parallel Australian GAP framework. The Horticultural Compliance Sub-Committee and AFFA emphasised that EUREPGAP is not the only scheme of its kind emerging in the global food trade and stressed that their aim is not to endorse it in particular or encourage its adoption as a national standard in Australia.

However, EUREPGAP is not an Environmental Assurance System. It is an on-farm management system that covers Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), including food safety, environmental, production, and worker welfare considerations, and which in the views of some delegates, does not provide sufficient environmental focus. See comments from Summary.

While the EAW focussed primarily on broader Australian environmental considerations, by the end of the workshop, it seemed that the rational course of action would be to respond to existing market signals such as EUREPGAP rather than to develop a separate, local EA scheme without a market incentive. It was also suggested that the progression of such an EA scheme would undermine the existing Environmental Management Systems (EMS) framework. Some delegates would like to promote Australia’s involvement in the ongoing technical development of EUREPGAP and strengthen the protocol’s environmental aspects. However, these considerations were not broadly endorsed by the EAW and are outside the scope of the EHCSC.

The advantages of a ‘EUREPGAP’ approach are self-apparent:

- A small but growing group of Australian farmers are already working towards EUREPGAP compliance to meet the requirements of European buyers. This number will increase.

- The influence of EUREPGAP will increase globally as the retail drivers spread into other regions including our major export markets, eg Asia.
- There is no commercial imperative for EA in Australia's domestic market at present, and no indications that this will be a consideration in the immediate future.
- The globalisation of the food supply system has led to the increasing development of trans-national solutions to product assurance such as those offered by EUREPGAP.
- EUREPGAP is in an advanced stage of technical development and implementation, but presents itself as a 'work in progress' and actively encourages contribution to its improvement.
- EUREPGAP is also a harmonisation scheme, which actively encourages integration, and building on existing on-farm systems. Thus work done to date on implementing existing on-farm systems is not 'wasted' but contributes towards EUREPGAP compliance.
- As Max Tolson (Mildura table grape grower who is implementing EUREPGAP) pointed out "by being tailored for fresh produce farming and being prescriptive EUREPGAP will probably be more effective than HACCP, and simpler to implement".

The following action is proposed for the Committee's consideration:

<b>Action</b>	<b>Action by</b>
1. Complete the existing benchmarking project to develop documentation to facilitate EUREPGAP compliance in the horticultural sector.	EUREPGAP Horticultural Compliance Sub-Committee

In addition, the following actions were suggested by participants of the EAW, but not broadly endorsed. It is suggested they be referred to the relevant parties for consideration and/or action:

<b>Proposed Action</b>	<b>Potential action by/referral to</b>
1. Establish an Australian taskforce to examine EUREPGAP, interpret the Protocol in the context of the Australian environment and suggest amendments.	Such an initiative may be supported under the 'food and quality initiative' under the National Food Industry Strategy.
2. Promote Australian involvement in the EUREPGAP Technical and Standard Committee. EUREPGAP is based on EU regulations and European environmental concerns. Australian industry involvement is necessary to ensure it can be adapted to Australian regulations and conditions.	
3. The Australian on-farm QA systems should apply for membership of EUREPGAP and undertake the full EUREPGAP compliance benchmarking process. This will need to be done at some stage if Australian on-farm systems are to be recognised as partially EUREPGAP compliant.	Freshcare, SQFI, HAL, etc...
4. The environmental considerations of the group outcomes should be referred to the NRMSC and	NRMSC and EMSSC

EMSSC for consideration and action. This may include consideration under the EMS initiative. Farm Food Safety for Fresh Produce".	
---	--

## **Appendix 1: Group Reports**

### **1. Use of pesticides and fertilisers**

- Build on existing on-farm QA systems.
- **Pesticides:** Encourage minimal use of target chemicals (through Integrated Pest Management)
- Look at the decision making process – ensure that existing programs cover all parameters eg: CHEMCERT.
- Examine worker training and safety and look at competency standards for advisers.
- **Fertilisers:** Investigate the possible use of on-farm codes of practice in QA schemes. Eg: The Fertiliser Industry Federation of Australia. Looks at managing the frequency, timing, and amount etc of fertiliser applications.
- Investigate reliable, cheap and practical methods of monitoring indicators for off-farm run-off and create a tally of use.
- The Sydney University Faculty of Agriculture is developing a methodology for the rapid testing of end products for levels of agricultural and veterinary chemicals. This involves using a solvent to extract chemicals and a dipstick method to indicate chemical presence.

### **2. Sustainable use of natural resources (water and energy)**

- **Principle:** placing a value on our natural resources and sustaining them for future generations.
- **Drivers:** Include cost and market access
- **Barriers:** economic barriers exist – farmers often have other priorities. Pitching environmental management on its own is not enough – integrating environmental management with QA and food safety needs to be addressed, as well as the integration of change agents.
- Private research also presents a barrier to the application of environmental management on-farm. The results of private research are often not freely available.
- **Industry specific issues:** These need to be addressed. For example, while water use is a key issue for the potato industry, orchard nutrient management may be more important to the citrus industry.
- **Solutions:** rewarding good practice and penalising bad practice.
- Government subsidies will also provide an incentive. While the EMS initiatives may be a good start, their application needs to be broader

### **3. Wildlife and landscape conservation and enhancement**

- EUREPGAP is relatively weak in this area. While primary production areas in Europe are often outside the boundaries of major ecosystems, this is not the case in Australia.
- EUREPGAP should elevate property conservation management plans to the MAJOR MUST category. This should involve the development of a standard document that can be adapted by each region. An appropriate representative must endorse these plans.
- The management control over the conservation plan must rest with the landowner – it is not enough for the lessee to sign off on the plan.
- The standard plan must relate to Australian ecosystems.
- For conservation management plans to work, incentives and support is required. This will be important for developing plans and the necessary conservation infrastructure.
- There is a role for government in providing incentives, particularly through NHT-type arrangements and accreditation in regional plans. Extension help will be critical.
- Production/conservation interface: the recognition of the need to balance the competing needs of conservation and profitable production is critical.
- It will be important to identify important issues before the conservation plan is written and address these issues in the plan.
- Public liability and access issues will also need to be addressed.
- **Education and training:** 'Accreditation' of conservation planners (can be landowners).
- Awareness raising for farmers and the public. This would involve communicating the benefits of conservation and any incentive schemes that may be available or in the pipeline.

### **4. Auditing**

- **Objectives:**
  - One farm – One audit.
  - Recognition of equivalence – standard owners must recognise other standards.
  - Recognition of existing auditor certification
  - Add value on site – not simply a compliance check.
  - Cheque/cash on the day!!
- **Existing standard:** A mutual recognition framework is already operational and can accommodate the above objectives.
- **Essential elements:**
  - Auditor competencies – matching the auditor to the standard and the client. Including the technical sector.
  - Independence/impartiality of auditors.
  - Calibration of auditors.
  - Auditable standards.
  - Audit framework/protocol including audit procedures, documents and initial and ongoing training.
  - Uniform sanctions policy.

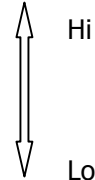
## 5. Environmental measures, indicators and monitoring

- **Assumptions:**

- Beyond farm issues – industry/catchment groups have taken some responsibility and some resources, tools and information are available.
- Focus is on individual farmers needs

- **Drivers – why monitor?**

- Track farm health/sustainability
- Drive production efficiencies/profitability
- Catchment health/neighbourhood pressure
- Provides management information
- Customer requirements.



- **Ideas for “Aust-Gap” protocol checklist/criteria:**

- Has the farmer undertaken an environmental risk assessment?
- Has the farmer assessed their benchmarks against industry/catchment ‘best practice’ (where available)?
- Does the farmer know where and how to obtain information on who has responsibility for environmental issues and monitoring roles (local/state/federal government catchment groups)?
- Does the farmer understand how to monitor risk, when to monitor risk, what the data means and how to use the monitoring information in everyday farming? There is an important training and support requirement here.
- Does the farmer keep a diary of all inputs and outputs – the monitoring regime?
- Does the farmer have a continuous improvement goal agreed with their customers/systems requirements? (must use current systems and auditing requirements).

## **6. Implementation and maintenance**

- **Drivers:**

- Customers (consumer and retail)
- Legislation and regulation
- Competition/survival
- Ethics and self motivation
- Industry organisations
- Knowledge (lack of)

- **Barriers:**

- Choosing a system
- Cost vs perceived benefits
- "Its too hard", or "not enough time"
- Resistance to change
- History of failures
- "All or nothing" – implementing a system does not necessarily result in higher returns.

- **Implementation:**

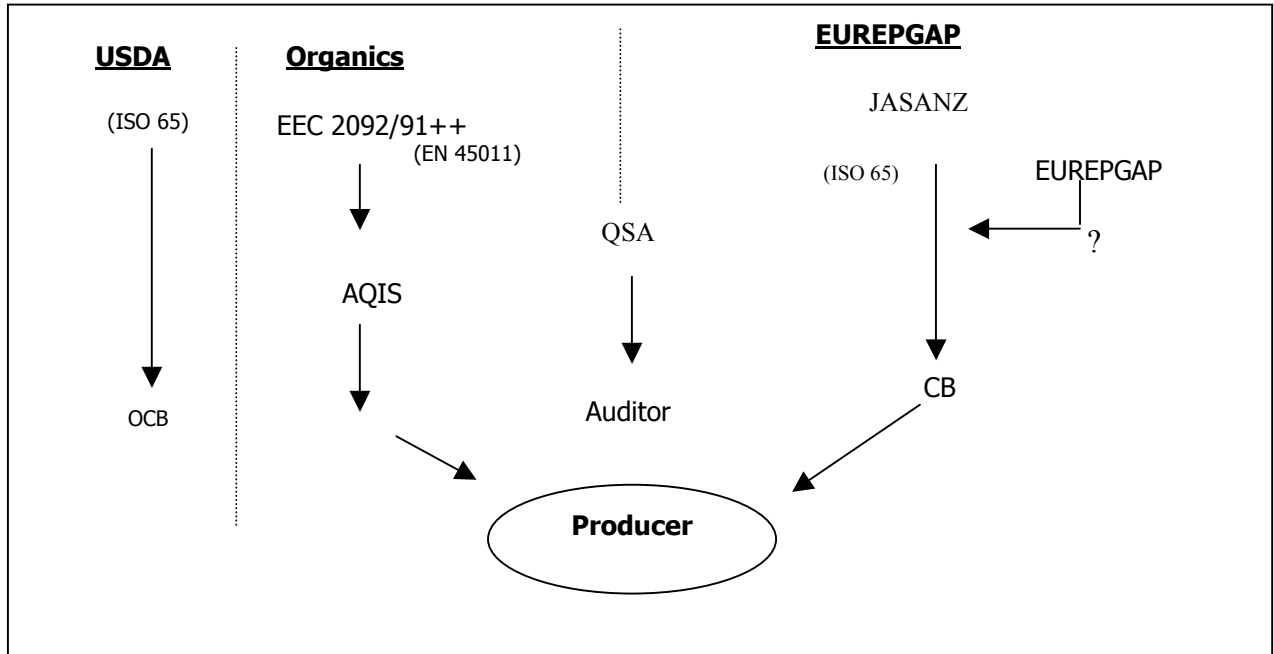
- Requires a communication strategy funded by industry that focuses on overcoming the barriers. Eg: which system to choose etc...
- Keep it simple
- Resources

- **Maintenance:**

- Ongoing resources
- Administration systems
- Continual improvement
- Promotion
-

## 7. Integrating Organics

- European input drove the development of the Australian National Standard for Organics (housed by the Organic produce Export Committee)
- The system for organic certification bears many similarities to EUREPGAP:



- There is some equivalence between EUREPGAP and the national organics standard. The organics standard is more stringent in many areas (particularly traceability), but has only the presumption of food safety and not the specification. Further, the organic standard does not include any worker health, safety and welfare.
- Organics can build on the many similarities that it shares with EUREPGAP, particularly in the areas of environmental protection.
- **Action Plan:**
  - Multi-skilling of auditors – organic/SQF/EUREPGAP
  - Align national standard fully with EUREPGAP
  - Link existing accreditation systems
  - EUREPGAP recognition of organic certification as complying with all 'MUSTS'.
- **\*\*Follow up:** Dr Moellor's comment regarding Austrian potato growers who are double certified to organics and EUREPGAP.

## 8. Education and Training

- **What?** Management systems should include: QA, EMS, export, business admin, training, production techniques and IPM. Agricultural and horticultural curriculums must include agricultural/horticultural training packages that incorporate QA management systems.
- **Why?** Improve management system and sustainability, meet world's best practice and market requirements, reduce risks, and improve personal and professional development.
- **How?** How do you provide the farmer with education and awareness? – Industry associations (unbiased and non-political advice), government involvement through regulation and links to training providers, retail involvement (for consumer requirements) and agents and marketers.
- **Who?** Who needs the training? – Farmers (owners and employees), agronomists, industry groups, retailers, agents, consultants and extension officers.
- **Delivery?** Registered training providers for agricultural/horticultural training packages to suit particular management systems. Delivery should cover simple grower QA implementation through to level I-VI and tertiary. Training needs to be accessible, farmer friendly, reasonably priced (eg FarmBis), flexible and industry specific. It should also involve follow-up support.

## 9. Customising EUREPGAP for Australia

- Protocol fixed until 2004
- Change requires membership of EUREPGAP and representation to the Technical and Standards Committee.
- Country customisation would include compliance with legislation – summary of appropriate legislation required.
- **Proposal:** Australian task force to examine EUREPGAP, interpret the Protocol in the context of the Australian environment and suggest amendments.
- Encourage Australian retailers to be involved in the Australian review and become members of EUREPGAP.
- Environmental Management Systems provide a practical approach for applying EUREPGAP and other QA frameworks on the farm.

## 10. Consumer awareness and education

- Consumer = person pushing the trolley.
- **Issues considered:**
  - Need to clarify the definition of Environmental Assurance so the customer is aware of what they are buying.
  - Australian consumers vs other nations. Overseas we need to convey that Australian primary producers grow in a sustainable manner – establish a point of difference. Domestically we must convey that agricultural producers are good corporate citizens. We want consumers to choose our product because we grow sustainably.
  - We have strong market signals for organics. Consumers perceive organics as a good thing but lack clarity about what it means.
  - Those who think they can educate the consumer in the hope of gaining a premium price – IT'S NOT GOING TO HAPPEN! Shift demand to a preferred product and manipulate market through consumer demand.
- **What do we want the consumer to be aware of?** Two messages:

- a. Most farmers aim to produce food and fibre with responsible use of resources: "I love my farm"
  - b. Australian farmers lead the world in environmental management: "bad press roars, good press whispers"
- **What not to do:**
    - Fight the organic argument – you don't get whiter by chucking mud at the other guy.
    - Branding – they are expensive to establish and there are too many in the market place. However, we need to consider something to indicate the compliance between producer schemes and lobby groups (eg national heart foundation) or outing non-compliers.
    - Use subjective rhetoric alone – need to back up with objective benchmarks. – "buy from responsible Australian Farmer."
  - **How too make the consumers aware:**
    - Link with pressure groups. Eg: Greenpeace, WFF, ACF, Australian Consumer Association.
    - Case Studies: trade publications, international government, media, schools.
    - Get in the face of Government/industry/educators. Repeat the two messages.
    - State the bloody obvious – use emotive and demonstrative arguments that we are good at what we do.
    - Use leadership resources through AFFA/NFF and industry groups. Use high profile promoters, eg: Dick Smith.

## **Appendix 2: "News' Article from EUREPGAP Website**

**28 July 2002**

### **100 Participants at EUREPGAP Awareness Workshop in Australia**

Hobart - Cologne: Registrations reached 100 participants for the first EUREPGAP awareness workshop held in Hobart, Tasmania, Australia, on 26 July 2002. The half-day workshop was part of the "On farm food safety assurance conference" organised by TQA, Tasmanian Quality Assured. Delegates came from all over Australia and New Zealand and demonstrated their interest in EUREPGAP. In a two-day regional EUREPGAP certification workshop that followed the conference (26-27 July 2002), the first 10 auditors and consultants were trained on EUREPGAP Fruits and Vegetables. From now on, there are Australian auditors available for EUREPGAP audits and undertaking first steps for benchmarking.

The Australian interest in EUREPGAP has been raised largely during the first 6 months of 2002. The Federal Ministry of Agriculture established a "EUREPGAP Horticulture Compliance Subcommittee" to identify those areas where Australian programmes on Food Safety, Environmental Protection and Occupational Health and Safety meet levels set by the partnership of EUREPGAP. Many speakers referred to EUREPGAP during their presentations and existing programmes announced that they would closely assess possibilities for recognition via benchmarking.

Principle features of EUREPGAP that were received as favourable:

- A transparent system for recognition of existing schemes and programmes via Benchmarking
- The potential for regional interpretation to adapt specific Australian legislation and growing conditions
- The foundation of being a "true" food chain partnership, industry owned
- An easy to adopt Good Agricultural Practice protocol that is based on a master HACCP plan (no full HACCP exercise on farm level)

The conference delegates committed themselves to explore opportunities for getting actively involved in the EUREPGAP Partnership and obtain adequate representation for the horticultural sector. Also other sectors expressed their interest.